



Commerce Secretary Gutierrez Declares Commercial Fishery Failure for Pacific Salmon Fisheries

August 10, 2006

Washington, DC -- In the wake of calls by top federal and state elected officials from California and Oregon to provide relief to salmon fishermen, Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez today declared a Commercial Fishery Failure for the California and Oregon salmon fisheries, pursuant to section 312 (a) of the Magnuson–Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

In a conference call this morning with the Governors of California and Oregon and the House and Senate delegations of each state, Secretary Gutierrez indicated that the Commerce Department has calculated that direct costs to commercial fishermen are approximately \$16 million. That does not include downstream costs to recreation and to those who depend on the fishing industry. This must be calculated separately by California and Oregon.

This declaration comes on the heels of the federal government's April 28th decision to severely limit commercial salmon fishing from Point Falcon in Oregon to Point Sur, California.

For the third consecutive year, the number of naturally spawning Klamath River Chinook salmon is expected to fall below the conservation floor called for in the fishery management plan for salmon. This is the largest fishery closure ever on the West Coast. It is having a devastating impact on coastal economies.

Last month, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved \$10 million in aid for communities hard hit by the fishery resource disaster off the Western U.S. coastline, but today's official declaration should make it easier to obtain additional federal aid.

Senator Dianne Feinstein said, **"In a conference call this morning, Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez declared a Commercial Fishery Failure. In a statement to the Governors of California and Oregon and the House and Senate delegations of each state, he indicated that the entire region from Point Falcon, Oregon, to Point Sur, California, has been affected.**

The Secretary also pointed out that a Commercial Fishery Failure has been declared prior to the end of the fishing season only once before, in 1992. This underscores the seriousness of this disaster and the broad impact that this is having on those who depend on salmon fishing for their livelihoods.

This declaration opens the door for more federal funding to those who have suffered as a result of the fishery failure. \$10 million was included in the Senate Commerce Justice Science appropriations bill approved in Committee. We will seek to build on this as the bill moves forward, or is incorporated into an Omnibus Appropriations Bill. The Secretary indicated that direct costs associated with the disaster are \$16 million, and it is up to the Governors of Oregon and California to submit the downstream costs of the disaster. Once we have those figures in hand, then we will seek that funding in this year's appropriations process.

This is an enormous problem for the salmon fishermen of California and Oregon. I'm so pleased that we were able to work across State lines and across party lines to get this done. This is a good example of what can happen when public officials work together to help people in need."

Senator Barbara Boxer said, "Today's decision to declare a commercial fishery failure off the west coast is a great victory for the hundreds of California salmon fishing families and small businesses that have been devastated by the near closure of this year's salmon fishing season. It has taken a lot of hard work to get us to this point, but we have not crossed the finish line yet. With this declaration in hand, we will now work with all of our colleagues in the Senate to get desperately needed financial assistance to our fishing communities."

Senator Ron Wyden said, "This disaster declaration paves the way for Congress to provide critical financial aid to the fishermen and small businesses devastated by the closure of the salmon fishery. This assistance may make the difference between being able to put groceries on the table or make their mortgage payments. Securing this funding will be a top priority for us when Congress returns in September."

Senator Gordon Smith said, "Oregon's fishermen now have priority for aid. The declaration clears the way for federal funds to be distributed to the fishermen and businesses supported by salmon fishing. I am going to continue pressing the federal purse for aid. The salmon industry must be sustained to maintain the vitality of the local economy. Commerce officials meeting with the fishermen and seeing the closure's impact helped make the case for the declaration crystal clear."

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, "For months, we have had clear signs that the federal government's severely restricted season would have widespread impacts on the salmon industry and the local economy. I am pleased that our joint efforts between California and Oregon have resulted in a determination that will lead to federal relief for the salmon fishermen and the businesses that depend on a plentiful fishing season. I will continue to work with Senator Feinstein and California's Congressional delegation to help secure funding to provide relief to those who are at risk of losing their boats, permanently shutting their doors or being forced out of their livelihoods."

Governor Ted Kulongoski said, "I welcome the decision by Secretary Gutierrez to grant our urgent request for a disaster declaration that will start the flow of federal help to

our coastal communities. I'm grateful to him and his Department for recognizing the urgent need that has arisen in the wake of the federal shutdown of this year's commercial salmon season. Oregon has responded to the need with direct cash assistance and a jobs program to help out-of-work fishers, but the state aid can only serve as a bridge to the day when federal help arrives. That day cannot come too soon."

Rep. Mike Thompson said, "Today's long-awaited announcement opens the door for the West Coast's salmon fishing communities to receive the relief they so desperately need. However, there is still a tremendous amount of work that needs to be done to help these families get back on their feet and restore one of the Northern California's most important industries. Congress must work quickly to appropriate the funds needed to help the thousands of families that lost their livelihood and we need a comprehensive plan to recover the salmon population."

Rep. Anna Eshoo said, "This is the news we've been waiting and pushing hard for. This gives the green light to Congress to appropriate the money needed to help not just the fishermen but also related businesses down the economic stream which have been devastated by the early closure of the salmon season."

Rep. Sam Farr said, "Today's announcement by Secretary Gutierrez to declare a commercial fishery failure will allow relief to all the affected communities along the west coast. Salmon fishermen were being unfairly penalized for the mishandling of the Klamath River habitat. I am glad that we are on the path to recovery and I will work along side my colleagues to make sure that Congress gets the necessary funding to ensure that we deliver relief for salmon fishers, the businesses and communities in California and Oregon. We need to support long-term solutions to the problems in the Klamath Basin in order to curb greater economic losses in the future."

Rep. Lois Capps said, "Commerce Secretary Gutierrez's declaration of a full commercial fishery failure for West Coast salmon fishers is good news for our Central Coast fishing community. I am pleased that the Administration has heard our concerns regarding the lack of adequate aid for this crisis and recognized the need to provide direct financial relief to these devastated salmon fishing communities. Congress must act quickly to allocate funding to assist these fishing families in their time of need and ensure a speedy recovery from this disaster."

Rep. Lynn Woolsey said, "This is good news. It's a rare happening that will bring relief one step closer for our fishers. The efforts of the congressional members from California to Washington will focus to ensure that disaster benefits become available before we leave Washington in October."

Rep. Greg Walden said, "With the disaster declaration in hand, now our work to secure the funding begins. I appreciate the commitment the Secretary made to me to personally call the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee to convey the Administration's strong support for emergency funding. In addition, I want to renew my call for a cabinet summit to fully address the steps needed to bring future certainty for fishermen, farmers and tribes throughout the Klamath River system."

Rep. David Wu said, “I am pleased that the Administration finally came to the right decision and will be helping Oregon salmon fishers and coastal communities. This disaster wasn't created by fishermen, but rather by poor Klamath Basin management decisions made back in Washington, DC. I sincerely hope that the lessons learned by this disaster will lead to a comprehensive long-term solution for salmon recovery in the Klamath River Basin. Nothing else will ever restore the salmon runs on the Klamath River.”

Rep. Darlene Hooley said, “This declaration has been a long time in coming, but I'm glad that Commerce was ultimately willing to work with those of us in affected states to expedite the process for declaring a fisheries disaster. This declaration is another tool to help us build more relief for our fishers. The next step is to continue working together as state delegations to get money appropriated as soon as Congress is back in session.”

A commercial fishery failure triggers authorities to respond to the economic impact of the failure and to promote the recovery of the resource. The fishery failure determination follows a decision last month by Gutierrez to declare a fishery resource disaster, making Small Business Administration (SBA) loans available. Since the Secretary's resource disaster declaration on July 6, SBA has begun receiving applications and has already approved nearly \$200,000 in loans.

Secretary Gutierrez also directed that the Commerce Department's Economic Development Administration (EDA) make fishery impacted communities a funding priority for FY'07 Economic Adjustment grants.

Additionally, Secretary Gutierrez requested that the Governors of Oregon and California closely review their pending 2006 Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund grant applications and determine how to best channel existing resources and speedily disburse monies to programs that can help effected fisherman.

Press Office Contacts:

Scott Gerber, Feinstein, 202/224-9629
Natalie Ravitz, Boxer, 202/224-8120
Melissa Merz, Wyden, 202/224-1170
Chris Matthews, Smith, 202/224-8329
Margita Thompson, Schwarzenegger, 916/445-4571
Lonn Hoklin, Kulongoski, 503/378-6169
Anne Desmond Warden, Thompson, 202/225-3311
Emily Kryder, Capps, 202/226-7747
Jeffrey Miller, Eshoo, 650/323-3984
Frank Bellavia, Farr, 202/225-2861
Nora Matus, Woolsey, 202-225-5161
Matt Daigel, Walden, 202/226-7338
Joan Evans, Hooley, 202/226/8018
Steve Marx, Wu, 503/326-2901

###